

First record of Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta* for Seychelles

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Première mention du Pétrel des Kermadec *Pterodroma neglecta* pour les Seychelles. Un Pétrel des Kermadec *Pterodroma neglecta* était présent à Cousin le 29 août 2003 et (probablement le même individu) le 29 juin 2004. Cette mention a été acceptée par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois comme la première pour le pays.

On 29 August 2003 Cas Eikenaar (CE) noted a medium-sized seabird on the hill of Cousin Island Nature Reserve within an open patch near dense vegetation. It was very obviously different to the Audubon's Shearwaters *Puffinus lherminieri* and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *P. pacificus*, common in the vicinity. Having taken two photographs (Fig. 1), CE approached the bird in order to examine it in the hand and take more photographs. The bird moved into the vegetation where it was caught next to a Wedge-tailed Shearwater, with which it showed no aggressive interactions. In the hand, the bird proved to be very strong and could only be controlled by holding the tail, wings and legs (Fig. 2). As a result, with no one to assist, the underwing was not properly examined and not photographed. Following release, the bird settled next to the Wedge-tailed Shearwater, again showing no aggressive interactions. The bird could not be relocated the next day. The photographs and description were submitted unidentified to the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC).

CE departed Cousin Island on 12 September 2003, returning on 20 May 2004. On 29 June 2004, what appeared to be a similar or the same bird was located at exactly the same spot as the previous year. The bird was caught and examined (Figs. 3–4). With the assistance of Lyanne Brouwer, it was possible to examine the underwing and to take measurements and a blood sample. Again, details were sent to SBRC.

Description of first bird

Pale grey-brown to white underparts contrasting with darker upperparts and wings. Back dark; upper back to neck gradually becoming greyish brown. Paler head also contrasted with darker upperparts. Whitish patch on lores extending to

above and below striking dark eye. Sturdy neck and short, thick dark bill. Area below gape and chin darker, greyish brown. Crown, hindneck and face-sides darker greyish brown. Forecrown slightly darker (especially feather centres). Dark tail, tip shorter or equal to tip of wings. Did not appear weak (as far as that can be judged without previous experience of the species) and resisted with great strength upon capture.

Description of second bird

Appeared identical to first bird. In addition, examination of underwing revealed this was mainly dark with white patch at base of primaries and white primary shafts. White primary shafts noted on upperwing. Measurements: weight 410 g, tarsus 41.8 mm, tarsus–toe 105 mm, folded wing 30.7 cm, stretched wing 46.7 cm, undertail 120 mm, uppertail 105 mm, head + bill 80.6 mm, bill from tip of nail in straight line to furthest point of gape 33.3 mm, bill depth measured just before nasal tube 30.1 mm.

Analysis by SBRC

Following circulation around the committee, examination of museum specimens at The Natural History Museum (Tring, UK) and consultation with contacts having experience of *Pterodroma* breeding at Mauritius and on islands in the Pacific, the SBRC concluded that the notes and photographs submitted for the first observation were insufficient to conclusively distinguish between Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* and Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta*. The second observation, however, was accepted as Kermadec Petrel. Given the absence of previous records from Seychelles, the extreme similarity in overall appearance of the birds photographed in August 2003 and June 2004 and the fact that the observa-



Figures 1–2. Kermadec Petrel / Pétrel des Kermadec *Pterodroma neglecta*, Cousin, Seychelles, 29 August 2003 (Cas Eikenaar)

tions were made at the same locality, it appears very probable they refer to the same individual.

In summary, the SBRC accepted the record on the basis of the following:

- White primary shafts, diagnostic of Kermadec (Herald has black shafts);
- Underwing mainly dark; white confined to basal two-thirds of primaries' inner webs (underwing whiter in Herald, including a pale strip inwards, slightly rear of centre);
- Rounded tail, characteristic of Kermadec (Herald has wedge-shaped tail);
- Mass within range for Kermadec (exceptional for Herald);
- Tarsus near average for Kermadec (too great for Herald);



Figure 3. Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*, Cousin, Seychelles, 29 June 2004 (Cas Eikenaar). Note white patch on basal two-thirds of inner primary webs.

Pétrel des Kermadec *Pterodroma neglecta*, Cousin, Seychelles, 29 juin 2004 (Cas Eikenaar). Notez la tache blanche sur les deux-tiers proximaux des vexilles internes des rémiges primaires.



Figure 4. Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*, Cousin, Seychelles, 29 June 2004 (Cas Eikenaar). Note white primary shafts in upperwing.

Pétrel des Kermadec *Pterodroma neglecta*, Cousin, Seychelles, 29 juin 2004 (Cas Eikenaar). Notez les rachis blancs des rémiges primaires vues du dessus.

- Folded wing within range for Kermadec (too great for Herald);
- Tail near average for Kermadec (too short for Herald; Kermadec is a short-tailed species despite being generally larger);
- Tarsus/proximal feet grey with bluish tinge, normal for intermediate-morph Kermadec (unknown in Herald).

Status and distribution

This is the first accepted record for Seychelles. Kermadec Petrel was once believed to breed exclusively in the South Pacific from Lord Howe Island east to Easter Island and some islands west of Chile (Carboneras 1992). More recently it was discovered breeding alongside Herald Petrel at Round Island, Mauritius (Brooke *et al.* 2000, Brooke 2004) and at Ilha da Trindade, Brazil (Imber 2004).

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